



Decision Memorandum

103 Salvage Project



**USDA Forest Service, Northern Region
Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests
Lochsa-Powell Ranger District
Idaho County, Idaho**

I. Background

The Lochsa-Powell District Ranger proposes to salvage approximately 12 acres of dead and dying timber located in the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests, Idaho County, Idaho at Township 35 North, Range 7 East, Section 6, Boise Meridian (see attached map).

II. Purpose and Need

The purpose and need of the project is to remove dead and dying trees, salvage valuable timber resources and restore tree species to the site. The project area is comprised of mostly dead and dying timber, the result of the 2015 fires. Healthy trees will be retained. The project area was not included in the 2015 Roadside Hazard Environmental Assessment due the low fire severity in the project area, and what appeared to be (at that time) low tree mortality. Since the initial field reconnaissance, tree mortality has increased to a level that it presents a hazard to the visiting public along Forest Service Road 103 (103 Road), a heavily used, public-access road. The 103 Road is also a groomed snowmobile route, so removing the hazard trees would increase safety for winter users.

Decision

I have decided to approve the 103 Salvage project with the following terms and conditions.

A timber sale purchaser and/or the logging contractor will cut and remove approximately 12 acres of dead and dying trees (as determined through the Nez Perce – Clearwater National Forests tree mortality identification guidelines). Harvest will be via a combination of cable, skyline and skyline with tractor swing-trail. Additional equipment to be used includes chainsaws, skidders (swing skidding), log processor, loaders, and logging trucks. A feller buncher may be used on an approved basis to meet Best Management Practices and Design Criteria. Slash at the landing will be piled and burned, and the site planted with seedlings. Disturbed soils will be decompacted and/or covered with slash to mitigate potential erosion.

The project area is accessed by taking Forest Service Road 100 to FSR 103. Harvest activity will occur adjacent to the 103 road and below the 5031 road. No temporary roads would be constructed.

The project will be implemented in 2018. The timber harvest will take approximately one year to complete, with pile burning and planting accomplished the following year. Retained live trees will be monitored periodically for health post project completion.

Design Criteria and Mitigation Measures

BMPs for Water Quality and Weed Management will be implemented during the project. The following Design Criteria are not all-inclusive, as Forest Plan standards are incorporated by reference:

Soil Resources, Water Quality And Fish Habitat

1. Directionally fell trees to facilitate efficient removal along pre-designated yarding patterns with the least number of passes and the least amount of disturbed area.
2. No ground based skidding would be allowed on slopes over 35%.
3. Limit operating periods to avoid saturated soils and prevent resource damage (indicators include excessive rutting, soil displacement and erosion).
4. Locate and design skid trails, landings and yarding corridors prior to harvest activities to minimize the area of detrimental soil effects. Space tractor skid trails to a minimum of 80 feet apart, except where converging, and reuse existing skid trails where practicable, to reduce the area of detrimental soil disturbance. This does not preclude the use of feller bunchers if soil impacts can remain within standards.
5. Recontour excavated skid trails and decompact landings to restore slope hydrology and soil productivity. The use of excavated skid trails and landings will be minimized. Where skid trails and landings are constructed on moderate to severely burned slopes, construction would occur only during a period when soils are not saturated and recontouring and replacement of at least 50% cover would occur immediately after use.
6. Retain 7-33 tons per acre of coarse woody debris (greater than or equal to 8 inches in diameter) following completion of activities. Drier Sites would retain 7 to 12 tons per acre and moister sites would retain 12-33 tons per acre of coarse woody debris. Reference "Coarse Woody Debris, Snag and Green Tree Retention Guidelines" (USDA 2008).
7. PACFISH default buffers would be used to define salvage sale unit boundaries. No harvest would occur within 300 feet of fish-bearing streams, 150 feet of perennial non-fish bearing water, 100 feet of intermittent streams, and 100-foot slope distance from the edge of wetlands larger than one acre or verified landslide prone areas.
8. In harvest units adjacent to high fire severity/intensity-affected RHCAs, default RHCA buffer widths would be increased, as needed, to protect RMOs and maintain function of the RHCA.
9. Use Forest Service approved native plant species/seed or non-native annual species/seed to meet erosion control needs and other management objectives. Apply only certified weed-free seed and mulch. (Timber Sale Contract Provision, currently C6.601)
10. Remove all mud, soil, and plant parts from off road equipment and equipment being used for road maintenance before moving into project area to limit the spread of noxious weeds. Conduct cleaning off National Forest lands. (Timber Sale Contract Provision, currently B6.35)
11. Protect TES plant species and/or potential habitat identified at any point during planning or implementation as recommended by the unit botanist and approved by the appropriate line officer. (Timber Sale Contract Provision, currently B6.24).

Wildlife

1. Stands meeting old growth criteria post fire will not be harvested.
2. Northern Goshawk – maintain a minimum 40-acre yearlong no treatment buffer (no ground disturbing activities) around occupied goshawk nest trees. No ground disturbing activities shall be allowed inside known occupied post-fledgling areas from 15 April to 15 August.

3. Maintain snags in accordance with Forest Plan standards including snag density and the scale at which those densities apply, preferably retaining larger diameter snags.

Cultural Resources

1. Halt ground-disturbing activities if cultural resources are discovered until an approved Archaeologist can properly evaluate and document the resources in compliance with 36 CFR 800. (Timber Sale Contract Provision, currently B6.24).

Air Quality

1. Coordinate with the North Idaho/Montana Airshed Group when prescribed fires are scheduled to ensure compliance with the Clear Air Act.

Visuals

1. Within all viewsheds, created openings within treatment units should not be symmetrical in shape. Straight lines and right angles should be avoided. Created openings should resemble the size and shape of those found in the surrounding natural landscape. Treatments should follow natural topographic breaks and changes in vegetation if possible.

Access Management and Public Safety

1. Dust abatement could be used on major haul routes to provide for public safety by protecting the road surface and to reduce sediment input to streams from log hauling activities.
2. Coordinate with the appropriate snowmobile clubs to minimize conflicts if winter log haul occurs on the following roads: Roads 103.

III. Rationale for Decision and Reasons for Categorically Excluding the Decision

A. Category of Exclusion and Rationale for Using the Category

Based on information in this document and the project record, I have determined that no extraordinary circumstances affecting resource conditions exist (36 CFR 220.6), that this project may be categorically excluded from documentation in an EA or EIS, and that it meets all the criteria outlined for 36 CFR 220.6(e) (13) Salvage of dead and/or dying trees not to exceed 250 acres, requiring no more than ½ mile of temporary road construction. The proposed action may include incidental removal of live or dead trees for landings, skid trails, and road clearing.

The rationale for my decision is based on: (1) the proposed action fully meeting the criteria for Categorical Exclusions, (2) the proposed action meeting the purpose and need, (3) the findings related to extraordinary circumstances, discussed below, (4) the project's consistency with laws and regulations, including the Forest Plan, and (5) my review of the project record.

B. Finding of the Absence of Significant Adverse Effects to Extraordinary Circumstances

Based on the findings for resource conditions described below, I have determined that no extraordinary circumstances are associated with my decision. Forest Service direction at 36 CFR 220.6(b) describes the resource conditions that should be considered in determining whether

extraordinary circumstance related to the proposed action warrant further analysis and documentation in an EIS or EA.

Additionally, 36 CFR 220.6(b) states, "The mere presence of one of more of these resource conditions does not preclude use of a categorical exclusion. It is the existence of a cause-effect relationship between a proposed action and the potential effect on these resource conditions and if such a relationship exists, the degree of the potential effect of a proposed action on these resource conditions that determines whether extraordinary circumstances exist."

1. Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species.

The Forest Interdisciplinary (ID) Team Wildlife Biologist, Fisheries Biologist and Botanist have determined the project would have no significant effects to federally listed and R1 Sensitive wildlife, fish and plant species and/or their habitats. Therefore, no extraordinary circumstances were identified for these resources.

2. Floodplains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds.

The Forest Hydrologist determined no significant effects to floodplains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds are expected for this project. The project is consistent with all applicable State and Federal water quality laws, and with soil and water standards in the Clearwater National Forest Plan, including the PACFISH amendment. Based on this analysis, no extraordinary circumstances were identified regarding floodplains, wetlands, and municipal watersheds.

3. Congressionally designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas or national recreation areas.

The project area is not located in any congressionally designated area, and therefore, no extraordinary circumstances were identified to these resources.

4. Inventoried roadless areas or potential wilderness areas.

The project is not located within any Roadless Areas, Idaho Roadless Areas, or potential wilderness areas, and therefore, no extraordinary circumstances were identified to these resources.

5. Research Natural Areas.

The project area is not located in any research natural area, and therefore, no extraordinary circumstances were identified to this resource.

6. American Indians and Alaska native religious or cultural sites.

Because of previous adequate inventory; or the type, location or nature of the undertaking - the Forest Cultural Resource Specialist has determined the above project has little likelihood to adversely affect historic properties. As a result, a *No Inventory Decision* has been made, and no extraordinary circumstances identified to these resources.

7. Archaeological sites, or historical properties or areas.

The Idaho State Historic Preservation Officer, or the Forest Archaeologist via the use of the North Idaho Programmatic Agreement, has determined that no archaeological or historic property will be adversely affected by this project. Therefore, no extraordinary circumstances were identified to these resources.

IV. Interested and Affected Agencies, Organizations, and Persons Contacted

On September 29, 2017, letters providing information and seeking public comment were mailed to individuals, organizations, a variety of state and local agencies, and the Nez Perce Tribe. Additionally, project information was also available at [http://www.fs.usda.gov/ nezperce](http://www.fs.usda.gov/nezperce) under NEPA projects. Two individuals/organizations during the public comment period, and their comments are addressed in Appendix A. The original letters are available in the project record.

V. Findings Required by Other Laws

Based on my review of the actions associated with this project, I find that the 103 Salvage Project is consistent with applicable Federal, state and local laws and regulations, including the standards and guidelines contained in the 1987 Clearwater National Forest Plan, as amended, as required by the National Forest Management Act of 1976.

VI. Contact Person

Questions regarding this decision should be sent to Jeff Chynoweth, Small NEPA Team Coordinator, c/o Nez Perce-Clearwater NFs Supervisor's Office, 903 Third Street, Kamiah, Idaho 83536; 208-935-4260 or FAX 208-935-4275.

VII. Signature of Deciding Officer



BRANDON KNAPTON
District Ranger
Lochsa-Powell Ranger District

11/7/2017
Date

cc: Danial Fabbi

Enclosure: Map

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Map of 103 Salvage Project

